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AMENDMENTS

In the Specification

Please amend the specification as follows to correct a typographical error:

At page 35, line 17, please delete "anima" and insert --animal-- therefor.

In the Claims

Please amend the claims as follows:

C1

1. (Twice Amended) A method to decrease the body weight or reduce the rate of weight gain in an animal, comprising administering to said animal a therapeutic composition comprising a melanocyte stimulating hormone (MSH) compound selected from the group consisting of α -MSH, α -MSH analog and an α -MSH agonist, wherein said therapeutic composition is administered to the periphery of said animal in an amount effective to measurably decrease body weight or reduce the rate of weight gain in said animal as compared to in the absence of administration of said compound, whereby administration of said compound minimizes delivery of said compound to the central nervous system of said animal, wherein said α -MSH is a peptide comprising an amino acid selected from the group consisting of the sequences represented by SEQ ID NO:1 and SEQ ID NO:2.

C2

4. (Twice Amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein said compound is selected from the group consisting of α -melanocyte stimulating hormone (α -MSH), a biologically active fragment of α -MSH, a homologue of α -MSH having α -MSH agonist activity, a non peptide mimetic of α -MSH having α -MSH agonist activity, and a fusion protein comprising an α -MSH protein or a biologically active fragment thereof.

5. (Once Amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein said compound is α -MSH.